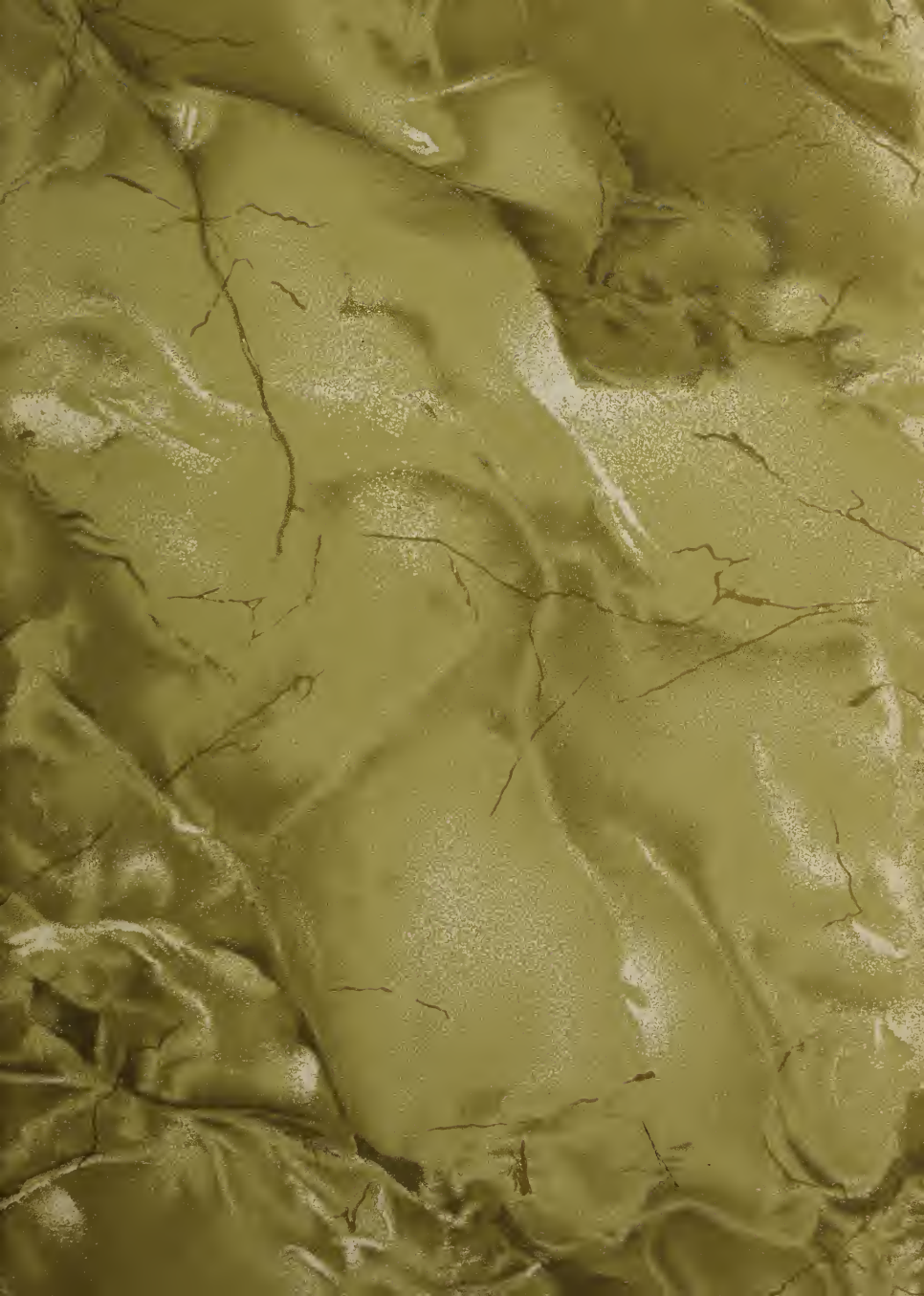


A HISTORY  
of the  
Washington State School  
for the  
Blind

Don Donaldson



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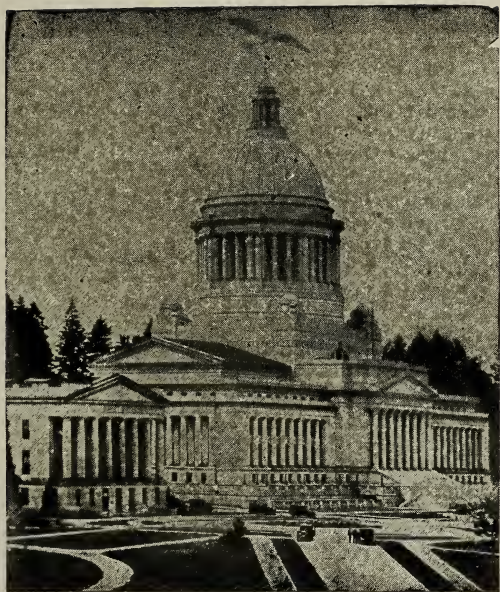
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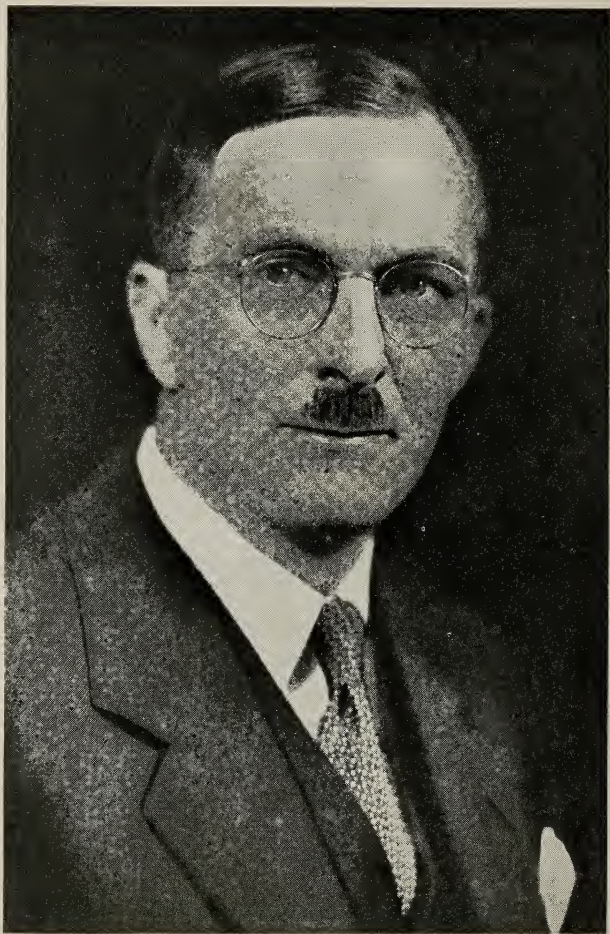
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1932—1940



**A HISTORY**  
of the  
**WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL**  
for the  
**BLIND**

. . . *By* . . .  
*Don Donaldson*

**A THESIS**  
Submitted for the Degree of  
**MASTER OF ARTS**



*University of Washington*  
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## PREFACE

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THE CASUAL VISITOR to the Washington State School for the Blind carries away with him a vivid picture—a picture of six solid brick buildings set closely together, overlooking the beautiful Columbia River valley, with its orchards, dairies and city lights; of smiling boys and girls, strolling arm-in-arm on the walks that parallels the front of the buildings, vying with one another on spacious lawns, playing football, wrestling, flying kites or roller skating; of scholastic activity with children rushing about with slates in their hands and Braille books under their arms; and over all, the strains of various musical instruments—piano, violin, cello, pipe organ, clarinet—blended in sweet discord.

The visitor, if he be of an inquiring mind, may ask what lies behind the happy, bustling life of this institution that releases almost daily souls imprisoned by physical darkness and gives to them wings of freedom to soar to personal triumphs. What is its history? And should he care to delve into records of the school to learn this, he will find his efforts of little avail, for nothing heretofore has ever been written on the history of the education of the blind in the State of Washington, except a few scattered and unrelated facts.

That this story may be reconstructed to its fullest detail is the purpose of this study.

Search for data on the subject has carried the writer to the documents and files of the Washington State School for the Blind, to the library of the University of Washington, the Law and Widener libraries of Harvard University, and the Blindiana of Perkins Institution, Watertown, Massachusetts. He has read all the reports and many papers of

former directors and superintendents of the Washington School for the Blind, the reports of special commissions, legislative house journals, gubernatorial messages, and innumerable newspaper clippings. Even a number of reports from other schools for the blind and the proceedings of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind have been scanned with the hope of shedding further light on the subject.

From this extended research has evolved this paper, which the writer sincerely hopes may be of service to others interested in the history of the education of the blind in the State of Washington.



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ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
Built in 1916



PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDING  
Built in 1936

WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND  
Vancouver, Washington

# A HISTORY OF THE WASHINGTON STATE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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## CHAPTER I.

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### Establishment of the School

THE HISTORY of the education of handicapped children in the State of Washington begins with the date 1886, at which time a territorial school for defective youth was established; but legislation relating to the blind and deaf antedates this by many years.

As early as 1861 Governor Turney asked the territorial legislature to enact measures which would provide for the care of the physically and mentally handicapped. "As enlightened men, and Christian legislators," Governor Turney pleaded, "you should make a suitable provision for unfortunate fellow beings, either deaf or dumb, blind, idiotic or insane. Such provisions for such unfortunates would gladden the hearts of all true philanthropists, and be hailed as an omen of that true and genuine religion which 'boasteth not itself,' but delighteth in doing the will of 'our Father who art in Heaven'—a religion that should characterize the conduct of all who enjoy the many blessings of the nineteenth century." <sup>(1)</sup>

In 1881 there was introduced into the territorial House of Representatives, and defeated, "an act to exempt the blind from school tax." <sup>(1)</sup> In November of that year a bill was presented to the same body calling for an appropriation of nine hundred and fifty dollars with which to send deaf-mutes of Washington Territory to the Oregon School for the Deaf. This bill was turned over to the Ways and

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1. Washington House Journal, 1861, Appendix A, p. 5.

1. Washington House Journal, 1881 H. B. 8, pp. 26, 80.

Means Committee, approved by that body, and passed on November 6, 1881. <sup>(2)</sup> A similar act "appropriating money for the care of indigent deaf-mutes" came before the legislature of 1883. <sup>(3)</sup>

Nothing more was done in the interest of the deaf and the blind until the territorial legislative session of 1885-86. At that session Governor Watson C. Squire in his message to the Legislative Assembly pointed out the need for a territorial school for handicapped children. "It is the conceded province and office of the Commonwealth to help educate and care for those of its youth who are thus afflicted," he stated. <sup>(4)</sup> "I therefore recommend that you consider the relative expediency of starting a suitable institution in the territory for the future care and education of all these classes, rather than continue the policy of sending a few of them to schools already organized in certain states in our vicinity. It is believed by those who have been engaged in schools for such defective youth, that a small institution of the kind can now be advantageously and economically established in the territory."

The legislature responded to the governor's appeal for at that session a bill was passed, and later signed by the governor himself, on February 3, 1886, which established the Washington School for Defective Youth for education of deaf, blind, and feeble-minded children of the Territory of Washington. The bill provided for a board of trustees, consisting of five members to manage the affairs of the institution; stated the qualifications, duties and salary of the director; named the location of the school; and specified the opening and closing dates of

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2. Laws of Washington Territory, 1881, p. 211.

3. Washington House Journal, 1883 H. B. 35, p. 80

4. Washington Council Journal, 1885, p. 9.



the term, the fiscal school year, application for admission, of non-residents, <sup>(1)</sup> etc.

The important provisions of this law <sup>(2)</sup> are quoted here:

SECTION 1. That a territorial school be, and hereby is established, to be known as the Washington School for Defective Youth, for the education of the deaf, blind and feeble-minded youth of the Territory of Washington.

SECTION 2. Said school shall be free to all resident youth in Washington Territory, who are too deaf, blind or feeble-minded to be taught by ordinary methods in the public schools: Provided, they are free from vicious habits and from loathsome or contagious diseases.

SECTION 3. The location of said school shall be at Vancouver, in Clarke County.

SECTION 5. Said school shall be under the management of a board of trustees, consisting of five persons of good repute and learning, being citizens of the territory, nominated by the Governor, and confirmed by the Council.

SECTION 7. After organization, as hereafter provided, said board of trustees, and their successors shall have the management of the real and personal property, funds, financial business and all general and public interest of the school, with power to receive, hold, manage, dispose of, and convey any, and all real and personal property made over to them by purchase, gift, devise or bequest, and the proceeds, and interest thereof for use of the school.

SECTION 13. All appointments shall be such that the board shall always contain at least one practical educator, one physician, and one lawyer.

SECTION 22. The financial and official year of the school shall begin on the first day of July, and end on the thirtieth day of June following. After the thirtieth of June, 1886, all financial business, accounts and official terms shall conform thereto.

SECTION 25. The Director of the school shall be a

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1. Years after the school got well under operation, due to the fact that the State of Idaho had not up to this time made provision for the education of its deaf and blind, the Washington School cared for a number of Idaho children. A sum of \$200 per year was charged Idaho for each child.—See, Biennial Report, Idaho School for Deaf and Blind, 1909-10, p. 3; also, Best H., Blindness and the Blind, p. 355.

2. Laws of Washington Territory, 1886, pp. 136-141.

competent, expert educator of defective youth; a hearing man of sound learning and morals, not under 30 or more than 70 years of age; practically acquainted with school management and class instruction of the deaf, blind and feeble-minded. He shall reside in the school and be furnished quarters, heat, light, and food.

SECTION 26. The Director shall be responsible for the care of the premises and property of the school, selection and control of employees, regulation of the household, discipline of the school, arrangement and execution of the proper course of study, training of the pupils in morals and manners, and the general oversight of all internal affairs of the school, and shall lay before the regular annual meetings of the Board of Trustees . . . a full report of the operation of the school during the previous school year.

SECTION 27. The salary of the Director shall be nine hundred dollars for the first year of his service in the school, with an increase of not more than \$100 per annum up to a maximum salary of \$1,500 per annum. He shall have no other occupation during his term of service in the school.

SECTION 28. The Director may be removed at any time with three-fifths vote of the full Board of Trustees for misconduct, incapacity, mismanagement, inefficiency or immorality.

SECTION 30. The parent, guardian, or next friend of any defective youth, residing in the Territory of Washington, shall, at least ten days before the last Wednesday in February and August of each year, furnish to the secretary of the Board of Trustees, in writing, full and satisfactory information concerning such youth. The Board of Trustees shall have power to expel any pupil from the school for good cause shown.

SECTION 32. Defective youths not residing in the State shall be admitted under such conditions as may be prescribed by the Board of Trustees.

SECTION 33. The regular school term shall begin on the last Wednesday of August in each year, and end on the last Wednesday of May following.<sup>(1)</sup>

A few days after the enactment of this law creating a school for defective youth, a board of trustees was appoint-

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1. The beginning and ending of the school term was changed in 1909 to the second Wednesday of September and the second Wednesday of June, following.— See Washington Session Laws, 1909; Ch. 97, p. 258.

ed by the governor, which took steps immediately to organize and to perform its official duties. It found a small class of deaf-mute children in Tacoma, maintained by charitably disposed persons and taught by a Presbyterian minister named W. D. McFarland, which it adopted as the nucleus for the new school. With furniture and teacher, this class of seven deaf-mutes was transferred from Tacoma <sup>(1)</sup> to an abandoned hotel in the center of Vancouver, <sup>(2)</sup> thus constituting the humble beginning of what has since become one of America's finest schools for the deaf.

In the meantime, a commission of three members was appointed by the governor to select a suitable site for the new school. The commissioners met in the First National Bank of Vancouver on the twenty-fourth day of February, 1886, and unanimously chose a site containing one hundred and twenty-nine acres. This report read: <sup>(3)</sup>

The said tract of land is about one mile outside of the city limits, and can be purchased for \$2,000. which sum exceeds but little, if any, the value of substantial improvements on the place, all, or nearly all of which can be advantageously used for the benefit of the school. The land is finely watered by a pleasant and never failing stream, which passes over its entire length, and, in our judgment, is well calculated for such gardening and farming purposes as the success and best interest of the school requires.

To further benefit the school, citizens of Vancouver donated to the territory a one hundred acre farm adjacent to the selected location, bringing the entire property of the school to an appraised valuation of \$5,000. It was on this land that a two-story school-and-dormitory building was constructed the following summer. <sup>(1)</sup>

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1. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1887, p. 4.

2. In Vancouver, also, was established the first public school in what is now the State of Washington, about thirty-three years before the opening of the School for Defective Youth.—See, Meany, Edmond S., History of the State of Washington, p. 69; also, Bolton, F. E., Washington Education Journal, Dec. 1932, p. 85.

3. Report of the Board of Commissioners to Select a Site for the Deaf-Mute School, 1887.

1. A description of this building will be found on page 9.

The Board of Trustees did its utmost to win the full cooperation of the territorial legislature. In picturesque terms bearing semblance of arguments used by the educators of today, <sup>(2)</sup> it pointed out the need for educating the handicapped children of the Territory: <sup>(3)</sup>

The conclusion of those who have given thought and labor to the solution of the problem, how shall we care for the deaf-mute, and feeble-minded is, that this portion of the rising generation, if permitted to grow up as ignorant animals, will become an especially dangerous element in our population. With human powers for evil, they have no means of learning nearly all that elevates manhood above the brute creation. If our boasted civilization has aught of practical wisdom in it, we cannot fail to care for those who are not able to hear, speak, see or understand, except as they are taught through laborious and expensive methods, calling for practice, perseverance and the queen of all virtues, Charity!

What transpired during the first term? How did the class of seven deaf-mutes and their pastor-teacher fare? These things must remain untold, for of them the reports are silent. It is only after the opening of the second full term, August, 1887, that greater light is shed on the history of the school.

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2. The following statement appeared in the Sight Saving Exchange for December, 1933; "If society does not keep handicapped children busy in a constructive way during their school lives, they in a destructive way will be likely to keep society busy in their adult lives."

3. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1887, p. 7.



## CHAPTER II

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### The Watson Administration

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WHEN THE HANDFUL of deaf students returned to Vancouver in August, 1887, to begin their second school term, they found a completely changed institution. There was a new location for the school, a new building, a new director, several beginning pupils, and—perhaps the most surprising—a little blind classmate.

The first director, Rev. W. D. McFarland, had resigned in June, 1887. The trustees were particularly fortunate, however, in obtaining the services of James Watson, an administrator of distinction and experience, who had previously taught at the Belleville Institute for the Deaf; <sup>(1)</sup> his wife, the daughter of the founder of the first school for deaf in Canada, had also been a teacher. <sup>(2)</sup> To Mr. Watson should be given credit for the success of the Washington School for Defective Youth during its embryonic years.

Besides the director, whose salary for the first year of service was fixed by law at \$900, there were employed during the second term four persons—a teacher, an assistant teacher, a matron and a cook. But such an “elaborate” staff was deemed too costly; so, during the next term, the wife of the director combined the duties of both assistant teacher and matron, thus saving the expense of one employee. The salaries paid these employees ranged from twenty to fifty dollars per month with room and board, which compared favorably with the salary schedule paid public school teachers at this time. <sup>(1)</sup>

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1. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1890, p. 3.

2. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1887, p. 5.

1. The average monthly salary of teachers in the public school system of Washington at this time was \$47.66.—See, Ninth Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Territory of Washington, 1889.

There had been instituted during the first term a movement to erect a building on the ground selected by the locating committee, but this seemed quite hopeless at first in view of the fact that the Legislature had appropriated no money for the purpose. Zealous exertions of the trustees resulted finally in securing only half the sum necessary to construct the building desired; however, five hundred dollars was borrowed from friends of the school, including two of the trustees and one member of the locating committee, and with these funds the building was so far completed by the beginning of the second term that the rented lodging-house in the center of Vancouver was abandoned for the new structure. <sup>(2)</sup>

This building was less than forty feet square, had two stories, and was connected with a small farm house. In it the students lived, ate, slept, and attended classes. So ill-planned was this new structure that even before the end of the first term of occupancy Director Watson submitted the following complaint to the board of trustees: <sup>(1)</sup>

Owing to the combustible nature of the building, the lack of proper fire appliances and the fact that during the cold weather we are compelled to have so many fires in stoves and open grates, a great deal of anxiety is caused. I would express the hope that during the cold season of the next session a night watchman will be employed, whose duty shall be to visit the various parts of the building at stated intervals, and thereby reduce the danger as far as possible. Fire escapes have been placed leading to the ground from windows of the dormitories occupied respectively by male and female pupils. These offer a ready means of exit in case of emergency.

The school building was not the only thing to which the director objected. Apparently the furniture which had been transferred from Tacoma with the first class and later placed in the new home, had now become dilapidated. Mr.

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2. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1887, p. 4.

1. Report of the Director, 1888, pp. 24-25.

Watson says in his report of 1889: <sup>(2)</sup> "I would recommend that iron bedsteads be procured to take the place of those in both the boys' and girls' dormitories. They have become so rickety, being of wood and of cheap grade, that it is almost impossible to keep them together."

Twenty pupils were in attendance the second term, of which nineteen were deaf-mutes and one a blind youth. Five of these nineteen deaf children came from one family, the Wade family of Montesano. <sup>(1)</sup> Many others within the territory were eligible to receive the benefits of the institution; but in presence of the fact that the class rooms and dormitories of the school were already crowded to capacity, it was indeed fortunate that not more children pressed their claim for admission. <sup>(2)</sup>

The only blind student enrolled was a boy from Tacoma named Harry E. Applegate. Although the school was not in a position at the time to receive blind children, the parents of this youth were so insistent that their son be given an education that Mr. Watson felt constrained to give him the benefit of such advantages as the institution could offer. Embossed books, valued at twenty-five dollars, were donated by Perkins Institution <sup>(3)</sup> for his use, and became the initial equipment of a department for the blind.

As evidence of the progress made by this first blind student may be mentioned the fact that in a short time he had learned to read simple sentences by means of raised letters, had mastered a primer, first, second, and third readers, and was able to derive much pleasure from his ability to read the New Testament. He was taught to write legibly, could express his thoughts in composition, and often

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2. Report of the Director, 1889, p. 34.

1. Report of the Director, 1888, pp. 15, 27.

2. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1887, p. 6.

3. Perkins Institution was established in 1829, the first school for the education of the blind in America.

wrote letters to his parents. His knowledge of history, geography, grammar and arithmetic was pointed to with pride by his teachers. <sup>(1)</sup>

It was greatly regretted by Mr. Watson that other blind students could not be accommodated at the school. "It is impossible," he wrote, <sup>(2)</sup> "to extend the advantages of the institution to a number of this class of children and to do them that measure of justice, educationally and otherwise, to which they are entitled, until we are in a position financially to employ a special teacher for that department."

Early in the year 1888 both houses of the legislature unanimously voted the sum of thirty thousand dollars for the erection of new buildings upon a site overlooking the Columbia River. <sup>(3)</sup>

The position is very commanding and the location salubrious. The lordly Columbia River, with its ever increasing steamboat traffic and its thousands of summer excursionists, flows past the doors of this institution; and for miles in either direction holds the eye of the beholder. The city of Portland and the continually multiplying and flourishing suburban towns and villages, with the glory crowned mountains of the Cascade Range, will never fail to exert a valuable and delightful educational influence upon the generations of unfortunate children of the state, whose eyes and hands must perform for them the double function of ears and tongues. <sup>(4)</sup>

One large building designed by a Michigan architect, was constructed, and was first occupied at the beginning of the term in 1889. <sup>(1)</sup> No longer was it necessary for the students and faculty to hover about open grates shivering during cold winter nights, as they had done in their old building.

In order to ascertain the number of deaf, blind and

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1. Report of the Director, 1888, p. 21.

2. Ibid, p. 32.

3. Session Laws of Washington, 1888, Ch. 45, p. 85.

4. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1892, p. 3.

1. Report of the Director, 1889, p. 38.



feeble-minded children in the territory, Mr. Watson sent a letter to every school teacher in the territory, inquiring as to the number of handicapped youths in each school district. The whereabouts of fifteen deaf-mutes, three blind and eighteen feeble-minded was learned; many teachers, however, did not reply to the inquiry. <sup>(2)</sup> Two years later the United States census of 1890 revealed that there were fifty-two deaf and seventy-eight blind youths under the age of twenty-one residing in the state; twenty-eight of the deaf-mutes reported were, or had been pupils at the school. <sup>(3)</sup>

Mr. Watson had long urged the enactment of a compulsory education law for handicapped children. As early as 1889, he stated in his report: <sup>(4)</sup> "It is impossible to arouse some parents to a sense of duty toward their unfortunate offspring, owing to mercenary or sentimental reasons; they will not avail themselves of this generous provision which has been made by the state for the education of their children. To meet such cases, it is to be hoped that the next legislature will enact a law calling for compulsory education of all defective youths between the ages of seven and twenty years residing within the state." Again, in a report of the trustees, dated March 3, 1890, there is found this statement: <sup>(1)</sup> "We suggest that all deaf-mutes, blind and feeble-minded children between the age of seven and twenty-one years should be compelled to attend this or some other like institution."

The legislature heeded Mr. Watson's suggestion, and enacted that same year the following compulsory education law: <sup>(2)</sup>

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SECTION 3. It shall be the duty of the parents and

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2. Report of the Director, 1888, p. 25.
  3. Report of the Director, 1892, p. 20.
  4. Report of the Director, 1889, p. 30.
  1. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1890, p. 6.
  2. Session Laws of Washington, 1890, Ch. 16, p. 497.

guardians of all defective youths to send them each year to the said State School for Defective Youth. The county commissioners shall take all action necessary to enforce this section of the law: Provided, that if satisfactory evidence shall be laid before the county commissioners that any defective youth is being educated at home or in some suitable institution other than the Washington School for Defective Youth, the county commissioners shall take no other action in such case further than to make a record of the fact, and take such steps as may be necessary to satisfy themselves that said defective youth shall continue to receive a proper education.

SECTION 4. If it appear to the satisfaction of the county commissioners that the parents of any such defective youth within their county are unable to bear the expense of sending them to said state school, it shall then be the duty of such commissioners to send them to such school at the expense of the county.

SECTION 5. Any parent, guardian, school superintendent or county commissioner, who shall fail to carry into effect the provisions of this act shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction shall be fined not less than fifty nor more than two hundred dollars.

The department for the blind could boast of but four pupils in 1891. These students were taught by the instructor of the most advanced class in the department for the deaf. It was stated in that year's report <sup>(1)</sup> that, "as the number of blind pupils will in all likelihood increase next term, the employment of a teacher in this class will be necessary." The next year, 1892, true to the director's prediction, the class of blind students numbered ten, and it became necessary to hire a special teacher; the teacher, Miss H. C. Pettit, remained the only instructor of the blind for the next seven years. Several of the blind pupils showed considerable musical talent, which they were encouraged to develop; others made noteworthy progress along literary lines, one of these being Robert B. Irwin, now Executive Director of the American Foundation for the Blind.

Mr. Watson, sounding a fundamental note in modern

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1. Report of the Director, 1892, p. 29.

education of the visually handicapped, summarized in the following manner the aims of the department for the blind: <sup>(2)</sup>

It is our purpose to impart to the pupils of this department a good common school education. And with that object in view the foundations of such training are being faithfully laid . . . . Shut in as they are by reason of their deprivation of really the most important sense, they are given more to reflection and thought than normal children, and in their studies during the term have done well. They are trained to be self-reliant and are never excused on account of their affliction from what may be any reasonable task, and each one has certain household duties to perform. We treat them as though they were normal children.

The extent to which these objectives of Mr. Watson were realized is shown by a report of a joint Senate and House committee which visited the school in February, 1891—the first official committee to inspect the school. The report is also of interest because it gives us a glimpse into the life of the school at that time. In part, it reads: <sup>(1)</sup>

The joint committee appointed to visit the State School for Defective Youth . . . . have consumed an entire day in making a thorough examination of the buildings and of the methods in conducting the school. We find the building in a beautiful situation, on high ground, close to and commanding a full view of the Columbia River. . . . The forty-five pupils now in the school are almost without exception children who are endowed with bright minds and pleasing forms and features. . . . Mr. Watson and his family . . . are so managing the school that the pupils lead a happy, joyous life while acquiring a good education and being fitted to become honest, self-supporting citizens. It appears to the committee that the pupils unquestionably enjoy their life in this school better than they would in their homes, no matter how elegant those homes might be.

The defective children appear to have a greater thirst for knowledge than is felt by the average children of our common schools; and they quickly learn that everything is being managed for their own good; and that their teachers' hearts, as well as their minds, are engaged in their service. Your

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2. Report of the Director, 1896, p. 14.

1. Report of the Board of Trustees, 1892, pp. 14-15.

committee would most earnestly and emphatically protest against ever admitting among such children any who are feeble-minded, believing that the presence of such among deaf, dumb and blind children would be greatly detrimental to the latter, without providing any benefits to the former. We would therefore recommend that there be erected by the state a separate building for the education of the feeble-minded.

Upon the suggestion of this committee, the Legislature of 1891 granted \$20,000. to purchase grounds and erect thereupon a building to be used as a school and home for the feeble-minded. <sup>(1)</sup> Although the law of 1886, created the State School for Defective Youth, specifically stated that the school should be "for the education of the deaf, blind and feeble-minded youth" of Washington, nothing had been done up to this time to train feeble-minded children. It was not until December 8, 1892, that a department for the feeble-minded as a branch of the State School for Defective Youth was opened. The law transferring the feeble-minded children to Medical Lake and separating them from the School for Defective Youth <sup>(2)</sup> was passed in 1905; but the transfer could not be made until May, 1906, when the buildings at the new location were completed. <sup>(3)</sup>

That there has always existed a close friendship between the Washington and Oregon Schools for the Blind is apparent to one familiar with the history of both institutions. The Washington school, being the larger of the two institutions, has had an important influence upon the Oregon school. Oregon's compulsory education law for blind children, for example, can be traced to Washington Legislation of an earlier date. <sup>(4)</sup>

In 1900 Governor Greer, of Oregon, with his state board

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1. Session Laws, 1890, Ch. 1, p. 17.

2. Session Laws, 1905, Ch. 139, p. 254.

3. Cochran, W., Washington State Institutions, 1915, p. 23.

4. Seventh Biennial Report of the Oregon State Board of Educ., 1890, p. 11.

of education, visited the Washington School "for the purpose of gaining information as to the conduct of this institution." "We have gained much that we can use," wrote the Governor. <sup>(1)</sup> "The work here is equal and superior to that of a great many similar institutions in the country. Prof. Watson is fully alive to the interests and welfare of the unfortunate children given to his care, and his great work speaks for itself, especially to those who take the time to visit the institution."

In 1901 a bill was passed by the legislature which created a State Board of Control as successor to the Board of Audit and Control, and which defined the powers and duties of this new body, making it the governing, managing, and purchasing authority for Washington's charitable, reformatory and penal institutions. Although the School for Defective Youth was not placed under the full jurisdiction of this board until 1909, the law creating the State Board of Control is given here: <sup>(2)</sup>

SECTION 1. The Governor . . . shall, by and with the advice of the Senate, appoint a bi-partisan board consisting of three citizens of the state, not more than two of whom shall belong to the dominant political party, as members of a board known as the State Board of Control. The members of said board shall hold office, as designed by the governor, for two, four, and six years respectively, and may be removed by the governor at his discretion . . .

SECTION 3. The Board of Control shall assume its duties on April 1st, 1901, and shall have full power to manage and govern the Western Washington Hospital for the Insane, Eastern Washington Hospital for the Insane, the State Penitentiary, the State Reform School, the State Soldiers' Home, and the State School for Defective Youth . . . The Board of Control created by this act is . . . authorized and directed to assume the control and management of the said institutions, subject to the provisions of this act.

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1. The Vancouver Independent, quoted in Report of the Director, 1900, pp. 28-29.

2. Session Laws of Washington, 1901, Ch. 119, pp. 249-258.



SECTION 5. It shall be the duty of the board to visit, at least once each four months, the institutions under its control . . . During such visitations the board shall thoroughly inspect all the departments of, and investigate the financial conditions and management of the said institutions. . . .

SECTION 6. It shall be the duty of the board to appoint a chief executive officer for each of the public institutions under its control, who shall devote his entire time to the duties of his office and whose title shall be "superintendent" . . .

The combination of the school for the feeble-minded with that of the blind and deaf was naturally detrimental to the latter, and inimical to its proper development. Realizing this, Ernest Lister, then chairman of the board of control and later governor of the state, recommended to the Legislature of 1903 that the feeble-minded children of the state be placed elsewhere, that the blind be separated from the deaf and be given the quarters then occupied by the feeble-minded. <sup>(1)</sup> His board further recommended that the name of the School for Defective Youth be changed to "State School for the Deaf and Blind." Although these recommendations were not approved at that session, they were adopted by the Legislature of 1905, after having been presented by another board. As is shown by the following excerpts of bills passed by this legislature, the State School for Defective Youth was renamed, <sup>(1)</sup> and a new institution, to be known thereafter as the "State Institution for the Feeble-minded," was established at Medical Lake in Eastern Washington: <sup>(2)</sup>

SECTION 1. That the name of the State institution, located at Vancouver, Clarke County, Washington, now known as the State School for Defective Youth, is hereby changed to the State School for the Deaf and the Blind, by which name said institution shall hereafter be called and known.

SECTION 1. That a State Institution hereby is established to be known as "The State Institution for the Feeble-

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1. Cochran, W., *Washington State Institutions*, 1915, p. 23.

1. *Session Laws of Washington*, 1905, Ch. 139, p. 254.

2. *Ibid.*, Ch. 70, pp. 133, 135.

minded", for the care and education of the defective and feeble-minded youth of the State of Washington.

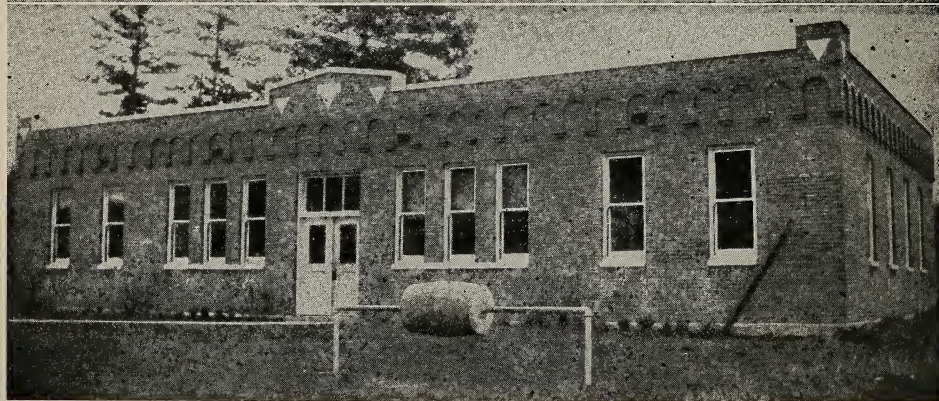
SECTION 10. That upon the completion and equipment of the said "State Institution for Feeble-minded" . . . and the removal thereto of the inmates of the present feeble-minded department of the State School for Defective Youth, that said feeble-minded department of the State School for Defective Youth as such . . . is hereby ordered abolished, and the buildings now or then occupied by such department of said school be hereafter used for the blind of said school.

The termination of the State School for Defective Youth also marked the end of Mr. Watson's career as director. The man who had nursed the institution through the trying years of infancy, who almost alone was responsible for its growth over a period of nineteen years, remained in office only a few months after the name of the school was changed. Pressure from his superiors forced him to resign. His removal was a keen disappointment to the deaf and blind of the state, in whose behalf he had given unsparingly of his time, heart and mind for two decades.

Mr. Watson directed the affairs of the school longer than any of his successors. His nineteen years of service is particularly significant in view of the fact that other western schools for the blind of the time suffered immeasurably from political interference; the Oregon Institution for the Blind, for example, had eight superintendents during its first fourteen years of operation.

Mr. Watson had dedicated his life to the education of the deaf and blind. His contributions to the work were many; and his successful pioneering efforts in Washington placed him in good stead to carry the torch of learning elsewhere. It was only natural, therefore, that the State of Idaho, in searching for an experienced educator to direct the education of its handicapped children, should turn to Mr. Watson. He was appointed superintendent of the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind immediately after his removal from the Washington School, where he remained for the next four years.





TOP—End of Administration Building, showing Girls' Dormitory. Erected 1912  
BOTTOM—Boys' Industrial Building. Erected 1917.

### CHAPTER III.

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## The Clarke Administration

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MR. WATSON'S SUCCESSOR, Thomas P. Clarke—a much younger man—took over the duties of director January 1, 1906. The progress of the State School for the Deaf and Blind under his administration was of such a character as to disprove charges made at the time of his appointment, alleging that he was selected solely for political reasons. <sup>(1)</sup> Governor Albert E. Mead and the State Board of Control were subjected to severe criticism as the result of Mr. Clarke's appointment. A strong effort was made to coerce them to retain Mr. Watson; but this they refused to do, maintaining that the institution was in a period of stagnation and in need of an infusion of young blood. <sup>(2)</sup> Thomas Clarke's qualifications were such as to convince them of his fitness for the office of superintendent.

The condition in which Mr. Clarke found the institution was described by himself as being "hardly credible." One hundred and thirty deaf and blind children were crowded into a building originally planned to accommodate about half that number. There were no halls above the first floor, a condition which caused great inconvenience since the schoolrooms were all on the third floor. To get in and out of their classrooms, the girls from the highest grade in the department for the deaf had to pass through every classroom; the blind children either had to do likewise or climb down a fire escape to get out of doors. The only access one of the teachers had to his bedroom was through the use of a fire escape. It was estimated by Mr. Clarke that each deaf girl had to climb at least forty-eight flights of stairs daily

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1. The Washingtonian, December 20, 1907.

2. The West Virginia Tablet, June 1, 1907.



in the discharge of her ordinary duties, so poorly planned was the building. <sup>(1)</sup> This condition was soon rectified, however, by transferring the blind to the building vacated by the feeble-minded children, and by erecting Mead Hall for the use of the deaf—making for the actual, though not legal, separation of the blind from the deaf.

Mr. Clarke realized that an essential part of the education of the deaf and the blind, is the education of the public. Accordingly, in order that the purpose of the institution might become better known, he seized every opportunity to speak before public gatherings. In an address at Port Townsend before a convention of the State Federation of Women's Clubs, he outlined in this manner the aims of the institution:

What is the object of our school? It is to fit these handicapped children to take care of themselves, to make self-respecting, self-supporting citizens of the children sent to us. The money spent by the State is not given in charity at all, but is invested with the sure hope of a bountiful return. The State expects to get its returns from the children who are taken from the ranks of dependents and lost sight of among the army of producers. The purpose of every school for the deaf and blind is to equip the child for life. To do this, we must aim definitely to make the graduate self-supporting. More should be expected from this class than from the seeing and hearing. . . .

At another public gathering, he described the purpose of the school in this manner: <sup>(1)</sup>

Let me impress upon you that this is a school and nothing else. It is not a home nor an asylum in any sense of the term. . . . Unfortunately this institution is not legally a part of the public school system of this State, but it should be. This school is the attempt to fulfill the constitutional pledge to give each child a free common school education, it being cheaper to bring these deficient children here and board them than to furnish special teachers at their homes, and the results obtained are better. We take up the work

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1. The Washingtonian, May 26, 1906.

1: The Washingtonian, December 20, 1907.



where the public school fails, and carry it on to a successful ending.

So effective were Director Clarke's public speeches that the Tenth Legislature of the State of Washington generously raised the school's appropriation, increasing the yearly per capita from one hundred and sixty dollars to two hundred and fifty-two dollars. This permitted many changes and improvements, chief among which was an enlargement of the teaching staff in both departments. <sup>(2)</sup>

Mr. Clarke also won favorable support of newspapers. In a Sunday issue of the *Seattle Times* <sup>(1)</sup> appeared this interesting survey of the work carried out at the school at that time:

Clarke is a great believer in the religion of work. He works himself and every one around him works. Every child in the school, both deaf and blind, has some work assigned which is suited to his or her physical ability. A well equipped industrial plant is connected with the school and each child is given instruction in some of the various trades taught. . . . The little folks do chores. It is interesting to see the air of importance assumed by these youngsters in the performance of their duties. . . . The blind boys carry stove wood and kindling to the kitchen; the blind girls wash and dry dishes and make beds. There is something doing every moment of the day, from rising time at six a. m. till bedtime, which varies from seven p. m. for the little folks to nine p. m. for the older children. . . . The children are as enthusiastic in their play as could be wished. The blind children have been skating on rollers for more than a year and no accidents have occurred. . . . The blind play hard among themselves. Sprinting, jumping, putting the shot, lifting weights, etc., are well done and enjoyed by these sightless ones. . . . The blind learn chair caning, hammock making, piano tuning, typewriting, music, sewing, crocheting, knitting, cooking and housework, in addition to the regular literary work of the school. . . . The children are taught to be as nearly independent as possible and learn to do many things without help.

It was inevitable that Mr. Clarke's dynamic personality

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2. The *Washingtonian*, March 29, 1907.

1. The *Seattle Sunday Times*, Nov. 6, 1908.

and great energy should win the full support of the Legislature. Through his insistence, legislation of importance to the education of blind and deaf children of Washington was passed in 1908. By the following act, <sup>(1)</sup> the Legislature placed the State School for the Deaf and Blind under the complete management of the State Board of Control, <sup>(2)</sup> changing the opening and closing date of the term, stated the qualifications of the superintendent, <sup>(3)</sup> and provided separate appropriations for the deaf and blind department: <sup>(4)</sup>

SECTION 1. The State School for the Deaf and Blind shall be under the direction of the State Board of Control; the funds for its maintenance shall be appropriated by the Legislature of the State of Washington.

SECTION 2. The regular term of said school shall begin on the second Wednesday of September, and close on the second Wednesday of the following June.

SECTION 3. The institution shall be free to residents of the State of Washington who are between the ages of six and twenty-one years, and who are deaf and blind, or either deaf or blind; Provided that they are free from loathsome and contagious diseases.

SECTION 4. The State Board of Control may admit to this school deaf and blind children from other states, but the parents or guardians of such children will be required to pay annually or quarterly in advance a sufficient amount to cover the cost of maintaining and educating such children.

SECTION 5. The superintendent shall be appointed by the State Board of Control, for a term of four years, subject to removal at the discretion of the Board of Control. Said superintendent must not be less than 30 nor more than 70 years of age, and must be practically acquainted with the school management and class instruction of the deaf and

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1. Session Laws of Washington, 1909, Ch. 97, p. 258.

2. What was formerly the State Board of Control was later changed to the State Department of Business Control. The Department of Business Control and the Department of Efficiency consolidated in 1935, and became known as the Department of Finance, Budget and Business.

3. "Director" was changed to "Superintendent".

4. The appropriation which the department for the blind received for maintenance, repairs and improvements for this first biennium was \$18,430—See Vancouver Columbian, April 25, 1909.

blind, having had at least ten years actual experience in teaching in schools for the deaf and blind. The superintendent shall have powers to appoint all subordinates. The State Board of Control shall have power to fix the number of employees and the salary paid each and may discharge any employee at its discretion.

SECTION 7. It shall be the duty of each county school superintendent to make a full and specific report of such deaf, mute or blind youth to the county commissioners of his county at the regular meetings of said commissioners held in August of each year. . .

SECTION 8. It shall be the duty of the parents or guardians of all such deaf or blind youth to send them each year to the said state school for the deaf and the blind.

The question is sometimes asked why the state schools for the deaf and blind were placed under the complete management of the State Board of Control (now the Department of Finance, Budget and Business) rather than under the State Department of Education, inasmuch as these institutions are essentially educational in character. An answer to this question can be found in the fact that the State Department of Education has purely an administrative function, and does not handle any financial matters whatever in regard to public schools or various state institutions. The advantage in having a state board of control in charge of state charitable, eleemosynary and educational institutions is that such an agency can secure greater economy and more equitable appropriations. There is, however, good reason why the direction of education in the penal and corrective institutions of the state, as well as the state supported custodial schools for defective children, should be under the State Department of Education. It is hoped that legislation will be passed in the near future which will authorize the State Department of Education to assume general supervision of the educational activities of these institutions.

Governor Albert E. Mead made a recommendation to the Legislature about this time, which if it had been ap-

proved, would have materially helped the school. He suggested that a special fund be established from money received from the sale of state timber for the purpose of creating a permanent endowment for the maintenance of the School for the Deaf and Blind and the School for the Feeble-minded. "If this plan is adopted," he stated in his message to the Legislature, <sup>(1)</sup> "the institutions named will in time be supported by the earnings of their endowments." Unfortunately, however, his proposal was not approved.

Removal of the blind students to the buildings formerly occupied by the feeble-minded, and enlargement of responsibilities placed upon Mr. Clarke, necessitated the appointment of a principal to head the department for the blind. Mr. George H. Mullin, for several years a teacher in the department, was appointed principal of the blind in 1908.

Life at the school under the new principal continued quietly until the opening months of 1911, when members of the House of Representatives visited the institution. Finding numerous inadequacies, they described before a session of the House the existing conditions at the school, severely criticising the State Board of Control and the administration, and even suggesting that the Board be subject for investigation by the Legislature on the grounds of neglect. A bill appropriating fifty thousand dollars for the construction of a new building for the blind was presented, followed by a dramatic scene. Participating in the debate, Representative Beach, of Mason County, went on the floor to urge the passage of the bill. The touching oratory which ensued was said to have affected all who heard. <sup>(1)</sup>

"Is there a member in this House," Representative Beach was reported to have said, "who has visited this institution without it bringing the tears to his eyes; he must

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1. Gov. A. E. Mead, Third Message to the Legislature, 1909, p. 33.

1. The Seattle Times, Feb. 25, 1911.



have a heart of stone. These poor, helpless, little children are sent to this school between the ages of four and six years. They are a charge that this state should provide with the most tender care, and the fact that this is in its present condition is a disgrace to the State of Washington. We cannot make a mistake when we appropriate money to care for these blind children."

A representative from Spokane then took the floor and described the condition of the school. "There is not a piece of furniture in the entire building," he said "that I would have in the basement of my house. The building is so dilapidated that it is a disgrace to all for it to continue to be used. I presume the only reason these children were put in such a building was because those responsible thought they were blind and unable to see their surroundings. The beds are all broken down and unfit for the use of human beings, and I find that during the past year the Board of Control has made but one visit to the school, and this lasted only a few minutes. Even though these helpless little children are blind, they are modest about undressing before each other, and the superintendent of the school has divided some of the place into stalls which are very dark and gloomy. It is a well known fact that the blind require light even more than people who can see, and so far as my vote is concerned, it will be cast in favor of these blind children."

Representative Ennis, of King County, the next speaker, declared the matter should be given a thorough investigation. "Why has such a condition been allowed to continue?" he asked. "We should find out where the responsibility lies, and take drastic action to prevent such gross mismanagement. Such conditions as have been described here are shameful, and if the Board of Control is not managing this school properly, we should know it."

An attempt was also made to remove the school to a



more centralized and populous section of the state. Olympia was mentioned prominently for this location; but Governor Hay in a special message to the Legislature recommended the removal of the school from Vancouver to a place adjacent to some higher institution of learning, preferably the University of Washington, at Seattle. "These pupils will thereby be enabled to derive as much benefit from the oral instruction and lectures at the higher institution of learning as if blessed with all their senses." <sup>(1)</sup>

The outcome of this moving oratory was not a legislative investigation for the removal of the school elsewhere, but rather, the passage on March 8, 1911, of a bill appropriating fifty thousand dollars for the building and furnishing of two dormitories—one for the boys and the other for girls—on the site already occupied by the school. <sup>(2)</sup>

Completed in 1912, these dormitories still house the blind children. Both are alike—three story, box-shaped brick structures, set closely together, with an administration and school building (erected in 1915) sandwiched between the two. Each dormitory when filled to capacity can accommodate about fifty persons; in each are fifteen bedrooms of several dimensions, shower rooms, club rooms, linen rooms and play rooms.

In the spring of 1912, Governor M. E. Hay appointed Mrs. J. A. Reed, of Seattle, and Miss Mary Goldsmith to make a thorough investigation of all of the state institutions. The purpose of the investigation was to give the Governor, and through him the public, a fair and non-partisan view of the actual conditions within these institutions. The commission, upon visiting the school for the blind, stated in its report: <sup>(1)</sup>

Gross ignorance on the part of the public regarding the

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1. Gov. M. E. Hay, Special Message to the Legislature, 1911.

2. Session Laws of Washington, 1911, Ch. 58, p. 318.

1. Goldsmith and Reed, Conditions in Washington Institutions, p. 29.

character of several of our state institutions have allowed legislative enactment to include our deaf and blind schools among the charitable institutions of the state. State schools for the deaf and blind are no more charitable institutions than are our city school system, our state normals, our state university or state agricultural college. The sooner both of these schools become legally recognized as a legitimate part of our state school system, the sooner intelligent parents of the blind and deaf children will take advantage of the educational opportunities afforded by the state, and the sooner the state will receive proper returns upon the money invested.

The enrollment of the school at this time numbered thirty-five, twenty-one boys and fourteen girls. Twenty-four of these pupils were in the primary department, eight in grammar school, and three attended the Vancouver Public High School. The school work did not carry beyond the eighth grade. Instruction in the literary department was divided between two teachers, neither of whom had had previous preparation for the work. Living within the institution, they received a salary of five hundred and forty dollars each nine months of teaching. No physical education program was followed, a situation severely criticized by Governor Hay's investigation committee. Piano tuning, net work, chair caning and weaving were subjects offered by the industrial department.

The Legislature of 1909, although providing separate appropriations for the departments of the deaf and blind, did not create two institutions. One superintendent, Mr. Clarke, headed both schools, with George Mullins as the principal of the department for the blind. Actually, the two departments were conducted separately; but they were not legally divided until 1913 when the Legislature passed the following law, which provided for complete separation of both schools: <sup>(1)</sup>

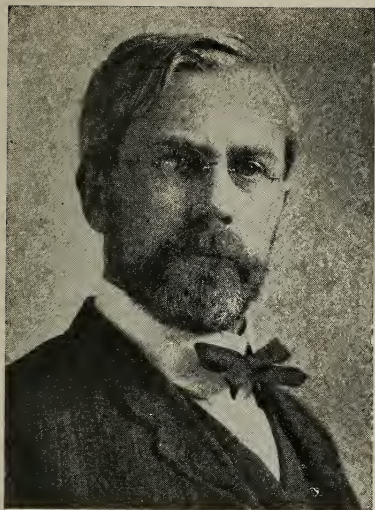
SECTION 1. Upon the taking effect of this act, the State School for the Deaf and Blind at Vancouver shall be

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1. Session Laws of Washington, 1913, Ch. 10, p. 6.

divided into two institutions, one for the blind to be known as the State School for the Blind, and one for the deaf to be known as the State School for the Deaf, each of said institutions to be located at Vancouver. The state board of control shall appoint a superintendent for each institution. All provisions of law relating to the State School for the Deaf and Blind shall, so far as the same are applicable, govern the management of the State School for the Deaf and the State School for the Blind hereby created.





W. B. HALL  
Superintendent  
September, 1913 to October, 1915



SADIE E. HALL  
Superintendent  
October, 1915 to September, 1920

## CHAPTER IV.

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### The Hall Administration

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THE LAW CREATING the Washington State School for the Blind went into effect at the close of the school term in June, 1913. On the first of the following September, Mr. W. B. Hall, Superintendent of the Kansas School for the Blind, was appointed by the State Board of Control to become the first superintendent of the Washington School for the Blind, after search for a qualified administrator had led to practically every state in the Union. Mr. Hall, then at the age of forty-eight, was recognized as one of the most progressive men in work for the blind in this country. A graduate of the Kansas Normal School, he had served many years as a teacher, as a superintendent of public schools, and later as superintendent of the Kansas State School for the Blind. <sup>(1)</sup>

It was his endeavor "to bring about a systematic and accurate teaching in all departments of the school," and to provide for the educational needs of the talented and mediocre. "We believe," he wrote in his first report, <sup>(2)</sup> "that the bright children are now better provided for than they ever have been. We know that the mediocre and dull are receiving far more intelligent help and attention." For the first time piano rebuilding was taught at the school. Physical education was given a place in the curriculum; chicken raising and gardening were encouraged.

Mr. Hall urged the Legislature to provide a fund which would enable needy blind students to attend college. "Such Provisions," he argued, <sup>(1)</sup> "would simply give the blind

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1. The Washingtonian, Oct. 2, 1913.

2. Seventh Biennial Report of the Board of Control, 1914, p. 128.

1. Seventh Biennial Report of the Board of Control, 1914, p. 131.



youth a pair of eyes and place him on par with his seeing brother. It would also give inspiration to youth of ability for scholarship in our school and say to him: "The windows are open, the light of Knowledge will be brought to you by a great State, attain'!" Mr. Hall had successfully persuaded the Legislature of Kansas some years before to enact a law in behalf of blind college students similar to the one he now proposed; but the Washington Legislature was not to be won. Not until twenty years later was legislation enacted in Washington designated to aid blind students in obtaining a college education. In 1935 the Washington Legislature passed a law which allows two hundred and fifty dollars a year <sup>(2)</sup> and exemption from tuition and laboratory fees to blind students attending institutions of higher learning within the state. <sup>(3)</sup>

Following the example of Minnesota, which was the first state in the Union to establish a summer school for the adult blind, <sup>(1)</sup> the Legislature of Washington appropriated eight hundred dollars in 1915 to establish a similar course at the School for the Blind. This course, open only to visually handicapped adults, included hammock making, chair caning, broom making, piano tuning and repairing, for men; sewing and crocheting, for women; and type-writing. Industrial supplies, board, room and laundry were furnished gratis; only transportation to and from the school was charged those who attended. Over twenty blind men and women took advantage of the course during the first session. <sup>(2)</sup> Other sessions followed, but in 1920 abandonment of the subject was deemed advisable because of the inaccessible location of the institution; the great distance which separated the school from the large population

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2. No money has been appropriated yet for this purpose.

3. Session Laws of Washington, 1935, Ch. 154, pp. 485-86.

1. Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Minnesota School for the Blind, 1916, p. 15.

2. The Walla Walla Union, January 22, 1915.

centers where the majority of adult blind live necessitated an outlay for transportation costs much greater than most of the blind could afford. <sup>(3)</sup>

Here it is fitting to refer to a summer course recently offered by the school. In 1937, with the establishment of a State Department for the Blind as a division of the Department of Social Security, a need was felt to place trained home teachers in the field. To accomplish this, a course, covering a wide range of topics bearing upon problems encountered by home teachers, social workers and ophthalmologists, was given at the institution. Twelve young women, all graduates of the school, were enrolled in the course, six of whom were to be appointed as home teachers upon satisfactory completion of the requirements.

Mr. Hall died suddenly, October 20, 1915, while playing tennis. <sup>(1)</sup> His wife, Sadie Hall, was thereupon appointed superintendent of the school to assure continuance of the policies initiated by Mr. Hall. A woman of intellectual attainments, strong character, and endowed with executive ability, Mrs. Hall was admirably qualified for the duties which she now assumed. Before her marriage she had been a primary teacher; after her marriage she had served as matron of the Kansas and Washington schools for the blind, as well as having been help-mate of her husband during many years of educational work. Her character and experience were such, therefore, as to convince the Board of Control of her fitness for the office. <sup>(2)</sup>

Acting upon a request which Mr. Hall had made two years before, the Legislature of 1915 appropriated seventy-five thousand dollars for the construction of an administration and school building. <sup>(3)</sup> The Legislature of 1913 had

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3. Tenth Biennial Report of the Board of Control, 1920, p. 30.

1. The Outlook for the Blind, Oct. 1915, p. 47.

2. Cochran, W., Washington State Institutions, 1915, p. 23.

3. Session Laws of Washington, 1915, Ch. 12, p. 11.

granted an identical sum for the same purpose, but the bill making the appropriation was vetoed by the governor. Architects from Spokane and Vancouver were commissioned to draw plans for the building; the contract for erection of the structure was let to a Tacoma contractor; and formal opening took place in December, 1916. <sup>(1)</sup>

The administration building occupies a commanding position at the front-center of the grounds, flanked on either side by the boys' and girls' dormitories. An expanse of level lawn, fringed with green shrubbery, gay flowers and tall Douglas firs, provide an attractive setting. The building is substantially constructed of red brick, and is well suited to the present needs of the institution. It has three floors and a full-sized basement. In the basement is a large and well-equipped gymnasium, boys' and girls' shower and locker rooms, the school library (originally intended for a swimming pool), home economics rooms, science laboratory and store rooms. On the main floor are the administration offices, reception rooms, guest rooms; the superintendent's living quarters; dining rooms for students, employees and teachers; bakery, kitchen, sewing and provision rooms. The second floor contains the auditorium, schoolrooms, and music practice rooms. Sleeping quarters of the staff occupy the entire top floor.

An industrial shop for boys, costing ten thousand dollars and erected in 1918, was also built during Mrs. Hall's administration. It constitutes a unit in itself, and is located conveniently directly behind the boys' dormitory. Here the varied activities of the boys' industrial department are taught; chair caning, piano tuning and repairing, carpentry, basketry and wickerwork. In sharp contrast to the somber and crowded industrial department of many eastern schools for the blind, located as a rule in the basements of large

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1. The Vancouver Sun, Dec. 1, 1916.

buildings used for school and administrative purposes, this building is well lighted and sufficient in size for the present needs of the institution.

Prone to give much space in their reports to the physical and material aspects of the institution they represent, many superintendents of schools for the blind fail to mention the achievements of former students, apparently not realizing that a criterion of success of any educational institutional is the praiseworthy accomplishments of its graduates. Mrs. Hall, however, was not oblivious of the achievements of former pupils. In terms of glowing praise, she described in her reports the success of graduates. "We are proud of the standings of many of our graduates of this school," she writes, <sup>(1)</sup> "and often refer before the children to the record made by our own boys and girls who call this their Alma Mater." She then describes briefly the successful careers of Robert Irwin, George Meyer and Lyle Von Ericksen, three outstanding graduates of the school. An account of the achievements of these distinguished alumni will be found in the last chapter of this thesis.

Mrs. Robert W. Limbach, head of the Bureau of Appointments at the University of Washington, tells an interesting anecdote which illustrates the liberal attitude of Mrs. Hall toward educational matters. The story concerns a senior student at the University of Washington who dared to be the first woman at that institution to have her hair bobbed. Her action completely disregarded convention, for in those days bobbed hair was generally considered as a social outrage. It was not surprising, that when this young woman sought a teaching position upon completing her course, no school board would employ her, although her scholastic record had been high. Finally, as a last resort, she got in touch with Mrs. Hall through the Bureau of

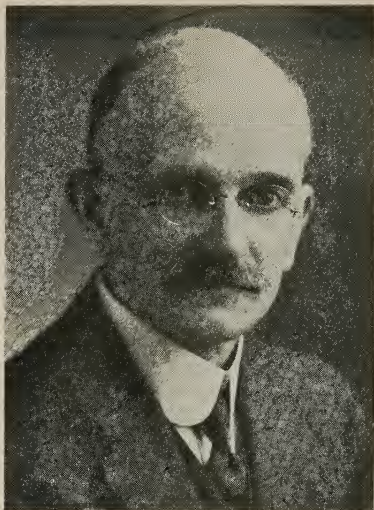
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1. Tenth Biennial Report of the Board of Control, 1920, p. 305.

Appointments, and was promptly hired to teach at the School for the Blind, where neither long nor short hair had any effect upon students.

During the wearisome years of the Great War life at the school continued quietly, disturbed only by occasional grumblings on the part of the students concerning the incessant and unappetizing menu of baked beans, codfish, gravy and substitute bread, which was served almost daily. But this was a period of sacrifice. The muffled reverberations of complaint were overshadowed by a spirit of patriotism and privation comparable to that shown by the seeing children of the public schools throughout the land. National, state and local drives were enthusiastically participated in by the students; uncounted bundles of clothing, discarded materials, even peach pits, were collected and sent out from the school with the fervent hope that they might aid in some way the American forces in distant France.





HERBERT R. CHAPMAN  
Superintendent  
Sept., 1920 to Oct., 1926



JEANNE E.  
CHAPMAN  
Acting  
Superintendent  
1926 - 1927  
Superintendent  
Since 1927

## CHAPTER V

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### The Chapman Administration

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THE RESIGNATION OF Mrs Hall in September, 1920, in order that she might marry, brought to the Washington school as superintendent Herbert R. Chapman, an educator who had dedicated his life to the betterment of the visually handicapped. Mr. Chapman's career in the work began in 1894 when he accepted a position as teacher in the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind; later he became principal of the department for the blind. He was called to Berkeley in 1913 to reorganize the department for the blind at the California School for the Deaf and Blind. Under his guidance this school took on a new educational lease, and soon became recognized by Stanford and the University of California as an accredited institution. <sup>(1)</sup>

It was Mr. Chapman's endeavor to raise the scholastic standards of the Washington school in like manner; and this he was successful in doing. Immediately upon assuming office, he introduced a complete high school course of study patterned after the course prescribed for the public schools of the state. The need for establishing high school departments in residential schools for the blind had long been a topic of debate among educators in the field, many claiming that public high school attendance by blind students was to be preferred. The arrangement up to this time of having the older students of ability attend the Vancouver city high school while residing at the Washington school, was felt by Mr. Chapman, however, to be unsatisfactory because it limited industrial training. "Experience proves," he argued, "that students do not get music, piano-tuning, broom-making, chair-caning, sewing, weaving, basket-

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1. Third Biennial Report, Dept. of Business Control, 1924, pp. 3-4.

making, and cooking while attending the public school day classes.” <sup>(1)</sup>

The high school, therefore, was organized to permit its students to follow the same general courses offered by public schools, while at the same time allowing the pupils to pursue vocational subjects. In order to keep in direct touch with the school system of the state, every pupil was—and still is—required to take the state eighth grade examination before being promoted into the high school department.

With the establishment of a high school department, it became necessary to appoint three additional teachers to the faculty. Mr. Chapman used the utmost care in the selection of his teachers, in this way the educational standard of the school was greatly improved. His teachers constituted an efficient, cosmopolitan group, coming from such distant places as Ohio, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, California, North Dakota, Kansas and Texas. That there were many changes in the corps of his teaching staff was greatly regretted by Mr. Chapman, but such changes were bound to continue, he pointed out, <sup>(1)</sup> until the schedule of salaries became at least commensurate with the salary schedule of city public school systems throughout the state; even then it would have to be admitted that the work of the teachers in the school for the blind is much more exacting and specialized.

Greater emphasis was placed upon industrial training and music than ever before. Two looms were purchased, and rug weaving was introduced for the first time. The prevocational and vocational departments offered to the boys; woodwork, hammock tying, chair caning, broom making, piano tuning, and repairing; to the girls; domestic science, dress making, knitting and crocheting, basketry, ironing and loom weaving. The music department gave

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1. First Biennial Report, Dept. of Business Control, 1920, p. 94.

1. Ibid., p. 95.

instruction in piano, organ, violin and voice. A special teacher in dramatics and vocal expression was employed to give lessons weekly to all students.

An endeavor was also made to enlarge the equipment of the school. The boys' industrial department was furnished with adequate tools. For the Kindergarten, Mr. Chapman secured sets of the Hill kindergarten floor blocks, the Montessori didactic apparatus, the Hennessey building blocks, and a cabinet of weights and measures. Other articles of equipment purchased included; a complete set of anatomical models, an articulated skeleton, several dissected wood relief maps, piano, typewriters, a dictaphone, and four transcribing machines. An open rink for roller skating and several cement walks were laid. "We have every reason to rejoice," wrote Mr. Chapman in his last report, <sup>(1)</sup> "to know that the work of educating the blind children of the State of Washington is becoming more effective on account of having the proper apparatus at ones command, and by having a suitable environment in which to work."

What was Mr. Chapman's philosophy in this "work of educating the blind child of the State of Washington"? Perhaps his best statement of this is found in an address he delivered at an annual meeting of county school superintendents in 1923. On this occasion he said: <sup>(2)</sup>

Our aim is to receive the blind child of kindergarten age in order to rescue it from the mannerisms and idiosyncrasies into which parents almost universally let the child fall. Through kindergarten activities and games and by means of various devices and by work correlated with physical education, with special training in the uses of the hands and sense training in general, the child is taught to find himself. . . . In the school our efforts are all directed toward a goal of rendering the pupils independent in the better sense of that term. The school exists that its pupils may acquire physical balance and poise, mental power in the solution of

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1. Second Biennial Report., Dept. of Business Control, 1922, p. 109.

2. From an unpublished paper, dated April 26, 1923.



real problems, the social amenities including how to meet people and how to get along with them, some appreciation of the finer things in art and literature and at least the rudiments of a training for economic independence. Training in morality permeates all of these. Character building takes places not through preachments and useless restrictions but through meeting the problems of the school and life in an increasingly courageous way.

To this end, the boys and girls of the school were taught to care for their rooms; they were assigned various duties within the buildings, and about the grounds, and were encouraged in every way to develop normal personalities. "Blind people of all others," wrote Mr. Chapman, <sup>(1)</sup> "must grow up not to feel that things 'just happen' or 'do themselves', for if so, tragedy will surely follow."

Mr. Chapman's long and successful career as an educator of the blind ended on the evening of October 15, 1926, when he passed away after a long illness. The writer, then a student of the institution, recalls the profound sadness that prevailed over the school when Mr. Chapman's death occurred, and how, a few days later, the entire student body attended the funeral of its beloved superintendent. The event was indeed a sad one in the history of the school.

Who was to succeed Mr. Chapman? was the question of the moment on the lips of everyone at the institution. The fear that a superintendent of less ability and understanding might be chosen was re-echoed from mind to mind, not to be dispelled until the joyfully-received announcement that Mrs. Jeanne E. Chapman had been unanimously appointed by the Board of Control to take her husband's place.

Mrs. Chapman, like Mrs. Hall, received her administrative background from first hand experience as helpmate of her husband. Coming from a prominent family, and graduating from a famous conservatory of music, she had won

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1. Ibid.

wide recognition as a violinist. At the time of her marriage, she taught music at the California School for the Blind; and, until her husband's death, acted in the capacity of violin and orchestra instructor at the Washington school. A better selection as superintendent could hardly have been made, for her appointment meant that the forward-looking policies of Mr. Chapman were to continue, while, at the same time, the head of the school was to be one respected and loved by both students and teachers.

No immediate changes in the administration of the school occurred. Work and play continued at the usual pace; schedules remained the same, only gradually, almost imperceptibly, did changes take place. Mrs. Chapman had taken up the policies of her husband; but as she grew in her work the horizon of her duties also grew—these policies she expanded and broadened to their fullest interpretation. She added music courses to the curriculum, such as musical history and appreciation, to comply with public school requirements, and promoted at the institution a thirty-piece symphony orchestra. She built up physical education by employing the services of a former University of Washington athlete. She put in charge of the boys' dormitory a college graduate, who formulated an extensive playground program. In the industrial department, she substituted for hammock and broom making the more practical subjects of tennis racket restringing and wicker furniture manufacturing.

Socialization on the part of the blind students has been foremost among her aims. These children now participate in such organizations as the Girl Reserves, the Junior Red Cross, the Torch Honor Society, local clubs, and churches, the Portland Junior Symphony, and the National Athletic Association of Schools for the Blind. Her students are allowed many privileges, including the intermingling of boys and girls on the playgrounds and at the dinner table—liberties seldom found in schools for the blind. With

this broad and comprehensive educational and social program, it is not strange that the Washington school has gained recognition as being one of the least "institutionalized" schools for the blind in America.

It is also easy to understand why Mrs. Chapman is regarded by students of the school almost in the light of a mother. "She has that warm understanding that encircles the world. She never says 'the students' or 'inmates of the blind school'. She speaks of them as 'her boys' and 'her girls' with genuine friendliness and sincere sympathy in her voice. Her understanding and sympathy reaches far beyond the limits of the one-time typical institutions head." <sup>(1)</sup>

And her interest in the achievements of graduates of the school is ever present. In all reports to the Board of Control, she points with pride to the accomplishments of this or that former pupil—and she is justified in doing this, for, as will be seen later, many of the graduates of the school have found places for themselves in the economic world. Through Mrs. Chapman's help, nine valuable scholarships have been obtained by students of the school since 1930; four from Perkins Institution, Watertown, Massachusetts, for the course on the Education of the Blind given in conjunction with Harvard University; <sup>(2)</sup> three from the American Foundation for the Blind, New York City; and two from the Cornish School of Music, Seattle. It is a widely publicized fact that "blind students at the University of Washington get much higher grades than the average student unimpeded by lack of sight." <sup>(3)</sup>

From these scholarships and the successful achievements of graduates, the Washington school has gained a position of prominence in the educational work for the

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1. The Seattle Times, April 11, 1934.

2. The writer himself was a recipient of one of these scholarships.

3. The Woburn Times, Woburn, Mass., March 14, 1935.

blind. The crowning of this recognition came in 1930 when the school was honored by being unanimously chosen by members of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind as the meeting place for the Thirteenth Biennial Convention of that organization. To this convention, which lasted from June 23 to June 27, came delegates from all sections of the Union, with twenty-six states represented, and from Hawaii and two Canadian provinces. The papers presented at the session were interesting; the discussion on numerous phases of work for the blind, valuable; and the automobile excursion to Hood River, Oregon, and Longview, Washington, enjoyable to the visitors. A hope expressed by Mr. Chapman back in 1922, that the Washington school be chosen as host to a convention of the American Association of Instructors of the Blind, had at last come true.

Other dreams of Mr. Chapman are also finding actuality through the efforts of Mrs. Chapman. The new primary building, for example, stands as a lasting monument to the foresight and unfailing endeavor of this man and woman. Mr. Chapman, during his years as superintendent, realized a need for a building where little blind children of the school could live, work and play in an environment conducive to learning; Mrs. Chapman, through unrelenting insistence, obtained support from proper state and federal authorities, and finally succeeded, in 1937, in having such a building erected, at a cost of about seventy-two thousand dollars.

The building, carefully planned to meet the needs of young blind children, consists essentially of one long corridor, eliminating in this manner strange hallways, projecting alcoves, and pointed corners which might end to confuse or do physical injury to the children. At each end of the corridor is a unit for sleeping quarters; one end for boys, the other for girls. Bedrooms of uniform size, ten in all,



contain four beds each, built-in wardrobes, and drawers for clothing and toys.

The center section of the building is given to school activities. On one side are two large schoolrooms, which open into each other by means of accordian doors; capable, therefore, of being quickly transformed into one large recreation or assembly room. Opening into these schoolrooms on either side are smaller rooms, in which private instruction or class recitations can be carried on as the occasion warrants. Located conveniently across the hall from the schoolrooms are the children's dining room, the service kitchen and a commodious and well-furnished living room.

Above the middle section, and comprising what there is of a second floor, is an infirmary, which has two four-bed wards, two single rooms, nurses' quarters, a utility room and bathrooms. An adjoining roof-deck can be used for sun baths.

Of brick, and trimmed modernistically with Tenino sandstone, the building is architecturally correct for the general plans of the other buildings. Heat, light and ventilation are adequately provided. The adjacent grounds are ample for play purposes, and have a cement skating rink, an open-air fireplace, and a grove of towering fir trees. Colorful shrubbery of the fragrant blossom variety lend an added touch of beauty to this—perhaps the finest, and certainly the most modern, primary building for blind children in America.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### Occupations of Graduates

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EVERY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND, according to a prominent educator in this work, <sup>(1)</sup> has a just claim for the success of life of its graduates. The scholastic and vocational training offered by the school in great measure enables former students to surmount obstacles and score success. The mature counsel of faculty members, based generally upon observation and personality study, often results in directing the interest of a particular student to a field of endeavor which he later choses for his life work. Furthermore, the school for the blind of today is striving as never before to secure positions of employment for its graduates.

The Washington School for the Blind, like other schools, rejoices in the successful attainments of its graduates. It is distinctly proud of those men and women—once its own boys and girls—who have gone out into life, buffeted an indifferant world, and emerged triumphant. It is proud even of those former students who are now filling positions which are more or less commonplace, for, in the opinion of workers of the blind, any sightless individual holding a position in competition with seeing workers and earning his own livelihood, regardless of how humble his calling may be, is a successful person. <sup>(1)</sup>

A survey of graduates of the Washington School for the Blind, covering the ten year period from 1924 to 1934, and including the first ten classes to be graduated after the establishment of an accredited high school department, reveals that fifty-one students were awarded diplomas for

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1. Hamilton, C. A., Outlook for the Blind, Dec. 1928, p. 41.

1. Wilber, Louis, Vocations for the Visually Handicapped, p. 111.

having successfully completed the requirements of the regular course of study. <sup>(2)</sup> Twenty-four of this number were girls, and twenty-seven were boys.

Nearly half of the entire group—twenty-four, to be exact—had pursued some form of higher education after leaving school. In 1934, the date of this study, ten were attending normal schools, colleges or universities; six had already graduated from normal schools or universities; three had taken the course on the Education of the Blind at Harvard University; three had completed short-term business college courses; and two had studied at the Cornish School of Music, in Seattle.

Thirty-nine of the fifty-one persons to have been graduated from the school during this ten year period were known to be employed in the following occupations, most of whom were entirely self-supporting:

Six were professional musicians, earning a modest living playing mostly in small orchestras. One member of this group had his own dance band; another was an accomplished pianist. Two or three taught music in their own homes during the day and played in orchestras at night.

Five were piano tuners, working in different sections of the state, and for the most part doing fairly well. All had taken the tuning course given at the school, which offers thorough training in piano tuning and repairing, and which operates on the tested principle that tuning is an occupation which may be followed successfully by any blind man who possesses an accurate ear for music, a certain amount of mechanical ability, and no small measure of determination and energy.

Broom making and broom selling drew five graduates. One hustler owned and operated a wholesale broom factory

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2. This survey was made, at the request of the writer, by Mrs. Jeanne E. Chapman, Superintendent of the Washington School for the Blind.

in Spokane with a payroll of a dozen seeing employees. Two members of this group, as partners in business, used house-to-house selling as a stepping-stone to something better; the money they earned from this work supported them through four years of study at the University of Washington, which later led to their appointment as instructors at Perkins Institution, in Watertown, Massachusetts.

The profession of teaching attracted seven graduates. Two held positions as instructors at the Washington School for the Blind; one as high school instructor at Perkins Institution, Watertown, Massachusetts; one as director of work for the blind in Alaska; one as a teacher of English in Japan; one as a home teacher, training the adult blind in their own homes, and one as an instructor of a course for nurses in California.

The remaining sixteen of the thirty-nine graduates known to be wholly or partially self-supporting, include; one physiotherapist, who was employed by the State of Oregon, and who owned his own home; one hotel worker; four Braille transcribers, all women; four married women, who managed their own homes; and six women who were living with parents, but assuming more than average responsibility in home-making.

If the preceding study were brought up-to-date, it would show that an even greater number of the school's graduates than is indicated here are now filling places of employment. This improvement in employment among the blind is the result of an extensive program being carried out by the newly established State Division of the Blind, under the direction of the State Department of Social Security. The Division for the Blind was created in the spring of 1937, <sup>(1)</sup> to provide for the rehabilitation, training and public assistance of blind persons living within the state, and to

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1. Session Laws of Washington, 1937, Chap. 132, pp. 489-96.



initiate and carry out a state-wide program for the prevention of blindness. <sup>(1)</sup> Already a number of graduates of the school, as well as other blind persons, have been placed by the Division for the Blind as home teachers, stand vendors and home industrial workers; many more will find employment as the work of this agency becomes better organized.

It is proper here to close this chapter by presenting brief biographical sketches of the lives of four alumni whose singular achievements proved beyond a doubt that the purpose of the Washington School has not been in vain, and that a blind person possessing a good intellect, initiative, character, and a pleasing personality can attain a higher degree of success in life. <sup>(2)</sup>

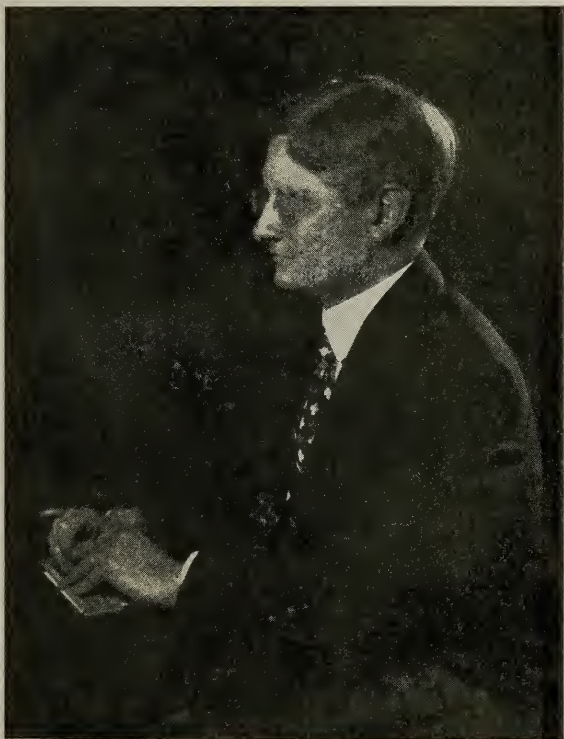
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ROBERT IRWIN early determined to disregard the obstacles of blindness, incurred at the age of five. The first blind pupil to graduate from the Washington School for Defective Youth, young Irwin worked his way through the University of Washington, received his bachelor of arts degree in 1906, and his master of arts degree at Harvard a year later. Further graduate study was discontinued in 1909, when he was called to Cleveland to become supervisor of the blind in that city. Here he pioneered in establishing sight-saving classes, making education possible for children whose sight is too great to classify them as blind and yet too little for regular public school work without special assistance. When, in 1923, the American Foundation for the Blind, a national agency, was organized, Mr. Irwin went to New York City to become its director of research and later its executive director. During the intervening years he has written books and many articles relative to the blind, has promoted the use of large type for sight-saving classes

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1. The Spokesman Review, June 13, 1937.

2. Donaldson, Don., Washington Education Journal, April, 1936, p. 11.



**ROBERT B. IRWIN**  
Executive Director of the  
American Foundation for the Blind, New York.  
The State School for the Blind is justly  
proud of its distinguished alumnus

in this country, and abroad, as well as having been president of the American Association of Workers for the Blind, and, in 1930, chairman of the sub-committee on the visually handicapped of the White House Conference. Robert Irwin, more than anyone else, is responsible for development of the Talking Book, a recording process, which, for the first time, enables the more-slowly-reading blind to enjoy literature. Through Mr. Irwin's untiring effort, Talking Book records are now produced on a large scale and circulated through all the public libraries having departments for the blind.

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GEORGE MEYER's career parallels that of Robert Irwin in many respects. He, too, graduated from the Washington School for the Blind, and later the University of Washington, (1918), winning a valuable scholarship for excellent work. After graduation he accepted a position with the department for the blind in Cleveland under the direction of Mr. Irwin. A year later Minneapolis engaged him to organize its day-school classes for the blind and semi-sighted. Retained in an advisory capacity by the Minneapolis board of education, Mr. Meyer came to Seattle to organize similar classes. From 1921 to 1937 he served as supervisor of classes for the blind and semi-sighted in the public schools of Minneapolis. As an authority on matters affecting the blind, Mr. Meyer, like Mr. Irwin, is internationally known, serving as treasurer of the American Association of Workers for the Blind from 1927 to 1931 and as president of that organization from 1931 to 1933. His activities in this field have taken him to Europe, once in 1931 as delegate to the World Conference for the Blind, again in 1932 as a member of the American Committee at the London Conference which agreed on a uniform Braille code for the English-speaking world. In the fall of 1937 Mr. Meyer was

appointed director of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind, in which capacity he is now serving.

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LYLE VON ERICKSEN, of Spokane, is a third alumnus of the Washington School who is making a splendid reputation. Losing his sight during early childhood, young Von Ericksen forged ahead with his education. While at the University of Washington he made an enviable record as a brilliant student. In 1922 he received his B. A. degree from Washington and later an L.L.B. degree from Harvard. Since completing his formal education Mr. Von Ericksen has been practicing law in Spokane, and doing well in this profession. In 1920, while still a student at the University of Washington, Von Ericksen founded the Eastern Washington Association for the Blind, an organization which for eighteen years has brought good fellowship among the sightless of the Inland Empire, striving for mutual culture and improvement of its members and kept alive to all questions of vital interest to those who do not see. He has long presided as president of this association, which now boasts a membership of over one hundred members, and his place among his fellow blind, as well as among his "seeing" friends, is one of leadership, and inspiration.

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EMIL B. FRIES, like those alumni just discussed, received his preparatory training at the Washington School for the Blind. But whereas the others are totally blind, Mr. Fries has partial sight; not enough, however, to enable him to read print or to recognize acquaintances. Despite this tremendous handicap, Fries majored in history and earned his entire expenses through the University of Washington by tuning pianos. A term paper which he wrote during his senior year was recognized to be of such worth as to merit publication in the April-June, 1930, issue of the Journal of



Abnormal Psychology. Receiving his bachelor of arts degree in 1930, Fries continued graduate study until called to the vocational department of the Washington State School for the Blind. In this latter capacity he has remained since 1931, achieving great success in training the blind children of the state to become useful, self-supporting citizens.

Undaunted by deprivation of eyesight, buoyed by a will that refuses to recognize defeat, and possessing the ability to make good, these individuals have attained positions of eminence. Theirs has been a long and arduous struggle, yet they have emerged in triumph. They are alumni of whom the Washington School may justly be proud.

## CONCLUSION

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THE PREVAILING SPIRIT in the Territory of Washington that perceived the true meaning of public school education as an instrument in molding state and national life, also saw the need for a territorial school in which the handicapped children—the deaf and dumb, the blind, and the feeble-minded—might be trained to become useful and law-abiding citizens. To this end, the Washington School for Defective Youth was established over a half century ago.

Like other similar state institutions, its roots were buried deep in the soil of earlier legislation relating to indigent and handicapped classes. Like other schools, too, its beginning was humble and precarious to its own well being. Yet it survived and grew. And, as we have seen, it soon became necessary to divide the School for Defective Youth into two institutions, one for the deaf and the blind, and the other for the feeble-minded; still later, to create separate institutions for the deaf and for the blind.

It is of the history of the latter, the Washington State School for the Blind, that this study has concerned itself. And in tracing this history two facts stand out above all others; first, the absence of political interference in the development of the school, and, second, the high types of leadership which have directed its progress.

While neighboring schools for the blind were suffering immeasurably from political intervention, hindered by frequent changes in administration, embarrassed by investigation after investigation and hampered by legislative wrangling, the Washington School for the Blind continued quietly and unimpeded along the course of its development. None of its superintendents were appointed or dismissed purely for political reasons, never was it subjected to legislative investigation, and only once in its entire history

was there a glimmering of political dissatisfaction at the manner in which the school was being managed. This is indeed a fine record.

Yet such a record could never have been made without able administrators. All the superintendents of the Washington School have been men and women of good training and long experience, who were genuinely interested in the welfare of the blind. Each has given that which his own or her own period of office needed most; James Watson laid the foundation of the school; Thomas Clarke spread its name; the Halls built its present plant; Herbert Chapman raised its curriculum to accredited standards; and Mrs. Chapman brought it socialization. To these splendid administrators, and to the wholehearted co-operation of former governors, legislators and members of board of control must be given credit for the past and present success of the Washington State School for the Blind.

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